

through the day, but always made home at night. Some of the members at times did not reach the roost tree till a good while after nightfall. The benighted ones called frequently on their homeward flight, and were answered by those that were already home. Other birds have special roost trees as well as Crows.

Every squattage homestead in the back country has its own flock of Crows. Individual members sometimes become so well known to stockmen that they are known as Joe and Jerry, and so on. I have often seen a small company, or a couple, chasing another Crow through the air, evidently an intruder. But when a dead beast was discovered, Crows were called to the feast from every point of the compass. When the banquet was over, generally about sunset, each group departed the way it came. Some of these groups, after a late meal, travelled twenty miles or more to their home camp. In the open western regions, where their flight can be followed for miles, and many camping places are known, their movements are easily noted.—E. S. SORENSON, R.A.O.U., 104 Sydenham Road, Marrickville, N.S.W.

\* \* \*

**Owl Calls.**—While reading lately an anonymous article in an English journal on "Spring's First Footfall," I was interested in this part: "The sibilant note of the Barn-Owl, the sad cry of the Wood-Owl, the *cat-call* of the Little Owl," because our small Spotted Owl of Tasmania has at times, when excited, a note just like the mewling of a cat. Are these "cat-calls" characteristic of the small Owls all the world over? The Spotted Owl (*Ninox nova-zealandia*) is fairly plentiful in my locality, which is well-timbered, and I often hear him at night through the open window; he frequently announces his approach by a series of calls, "Ohhh! Ohhh! Ohhh! Ohhh!" like a person much surprised or shocked. One summer night a pair came into a gum just back of the cottage, and apparently sat close together on one of the branches. He called, "More-pork" rapidly about sixty times in succession, but in a somewhat subdued tone, while she kept up a sort of droning accompaniment. This little insight into Owl courtship was rather entertaining, although too brief. Not long ago I saw it stated in an Australian paper that no bird calls "Morepork!" but that the call should be represented as "Morepoke!" or "Boobook!" This is a mistake as far as our island is concerned, for the Spotted Owl says "Morepork!" as plainly as a human being could pronounce the words.—H. STUART DOVE, F.Z.S., R.A.O.U., Tasmania.

\* \* \*

**The Birds and the Crops.**—A Story of the Egret in Egypt.—Did you ever hear the story of how Major S. S. Flower, director of the Egyptian Zoological Service, saved the beautiful

Egret from Extinction in Egypt? "In 1911, when the last little colony of Egrets was in danger of being wiped out by plume hunters, guards were placed around the one last nesting-place, and Major Flower organised a great series of village meetings, where the following lesson was well rubbed in: 'Egrets kill the cotton worm that ruins your crops. The plume hunters kill the Egret for gain and take the money out of the country. See to it.' The appeal succeeded.

"From a few captive Egrets in the Zoological Gardens fifteen Egrets were hatched in 1913. Major Flower estimates that these fifteen have now 5000 living descendants, and the fifteen ancestor birds are still alive and breeding. The one protected colony has grown to 200,000, and the birds have gone back to the old nesting-places from which the plume hunters exterminated their forebears. The most wonderful part is this: The 200,000 birds have saved the Egyptian cultivators £2,000,000 in the past season alone by keeping down the cotton worm. Major Flower pointed out that it would seem as if each bird were worth £10 a year to Egypt. They work across a field hunting down the pest."

\* \* \*

**Is Albinism Connected with Sex Characteristic?**—A specimen of the Small Yellow-tailed Tit-Warbler (*Acanthiza chrysorrhoa*) was recently obtained by me at Parwan, Victoria. Its plumage first attracted attention when the bird was seen feeding on insects on the ground with several other members of its own species. Its coloration indicated that its plumage was metamorphosing to a phase of albinism. When dissected, two experts were unable after minute examination to sex the bird. It would be interesting to know whether there is anything abnormal with the sex organs in cases of albinism in birds to prove whether this alteration in the colour of the plumage is a perverted sex characteristic, and that nature hoists the danger signal in the altered coloration of the plumage.—A. H. E. MATTINGLEY, C.M.Z.S., Melbourne.

\* \* \*

**Birds Seen on the Sydney-Melbourne Train Route.**—Having had the opportunity of travelling this route fairly often, I think that there has been, during the last year or so, a very distinct increase of the birds seen from the train. In one hour's run on the southern side of Goulburn, I noted the following species from one side of the train only, covering about 35 miles of country:—Magpies were particularly numerous, and well distributed right along the line between the two capitals. White-fronted Heron (*Notophox nova-hollandia*) (9); Nankeen Kestrel (*Cerchneis cenchroides*) (5); Rose-breasted Cockatoo (*Cacatua roseicapilla*) (This species was fairly numerous fur-